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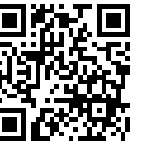

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BALKAN
NCIES

THER POEMS

BY

A.J.MANN.R.A.F.

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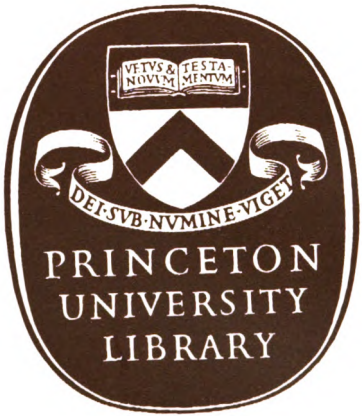

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Marianne Mann.
Oct. 1941.
from
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BALKAN FANCIES
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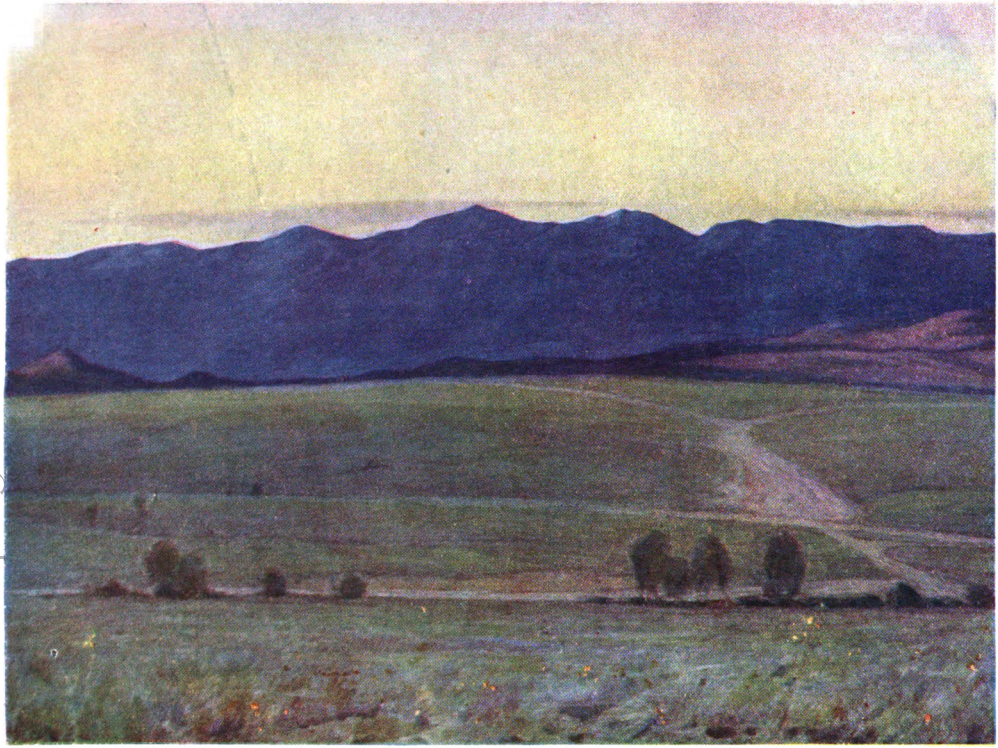

"BELES AND KRUSHA BALKAN." *Page 51.*

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BALKAN FANCIES AND OTHER POEMS

BY

CAPTAIN A. J. MANN, R.A.F.

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NOTE

CONCEIVED for the most part in the midst of tedious and exacting duties and jotted down on scraps of old Army Forms, derelict envelopes and the like, at moments when their author was astride a horse, in an aeroplane or balloon-basket, or rushing along the edge of a precipice in some bone-shaking motor vehicle, the majority of the poems selected for inclusion in this little volume came into being in the first instance as a wholly personal antidote against Balkan "ennui."

In the hope that they may perhaps touch a sympathetic chord in the hearts of all who were condemned to pass the greater part of their active war service in the Balkans, they are now sent forth on their maiden voyage towards that phantom Delphi which has its habitation in the hearts and consciences of men.

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DEDICATION

LIFE is a medley of colours and sounds, of delights and regrets,
Of laughter and tears. It abounds in the love that forgets
And that deeper affection which casts its own halo o'er all we attain,
The love that for ever outlasts through sunshine and rain.
Ours hath endured throughout tempest and time, and the desolate tide
Of winnowing warfare, whose crime and whose seasons of pride
Only welded together our pasts, forging links in love's firmly wrought chain,
The love that for ever outlasts through sunshine and rain.
Take, then, this handful of war-written songs, though you like but a few,
O truest of friends (it belongs to, was made but for you),
And, forgetting Death's fury that blasts and the years that bring sorrow and pain,
Know that our love for ever outlasts through sunshine and rain.

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CRANES BY NIGHT

EACH with his fiery eye that gleams beneath
His long bolt-studded arm, his pent-house sheath,
They wait in line, their four feet firm apart,
Resting on iron rails. A sudden start
Quivers throughout their frames. Behold them swing
Their vast arms sideways. From the gloom men bring
Barbed wire, huge lorries, cyclopean guns,
Shells and grenades. A pulley shrieking runs
Its wired prehensor earthwards, slowly spreads
Its wrought-steel sinews round huge rivet heads
And then behold a marvel, giant lifts giant
High as the mast-heads. To all aid defiant,
Each drops its burden deep within the hold
Of a near-moored ship. In days of old
Surely man had no power such loads to raise
With such consummate ease. Mere words of praise
Cannot convey this marvel to the mind.
Bettering the record of all human kind,
These giants recall that famous man of brass
Whom ancient Minos made for aye to pass
Around Crete's shore in fury, fearing none,
And by their aid the greatest war is won.

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THE FROG ROCK

BESIDE the Frog Rock we encamped
At eventide : the mists that damped
Our very souls spread high and low
Along smooth-winding Galico :
And, from the swampy hinterland
Beyond the stream, a noisy band
Of frogs in conclave trilled and ramped
Amid the reeds of Galico.

Then, as our last camp fire went out,
I felt the chill and furry snout
Of a wild dog that, scenting low,
Had swum across swift Galico
In search of what he might devour.
I held my breath. Some ghostly power
Affrighting him, he turned about
And backward fled towards Galico.

While from the reeds and sun-dried grass
That frog song mounted, I heard pass
Our sentry, pacing to and fro
Beside mist-haunted Galico.

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I fancied him some ancient man
Of Xerxes' horde who, ere began
The struggle with Leonidas,
Walked thus beside old Galico.

Beneath his firm and measured tread
Methought I heard the mighty dead
Cry: "Human dynasts come and go:
King Frog still rules o'er Galico."
Though creeds die out and customs change
And man's proud soul seeks wider range,
The frogs still say what then they said
Amid the reeds of Galico.

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BALLOONING ON THE STRUMA

HEAP high the logs upon the fire
And bring the charcoal brazier in;
This raw mist's getting very dire.
Come, take a draught of warming gin
Or other spirit. Let us sit
Around the brazier and contrive,
While shadows o'er the tent flies flit
And wild dogs howl, to keep alive
Home thoughts. Though clad in fur-lined boots
And leather coats, we cannot keep
This gnawing mist from our hearts' roots.
Chill tremors up our limbs still creep
That lull our very souls to sleep.

To-morrow morn the sun will shine
And in the clear, cold upper air
Above the clouds, a vista fine
Of snow-capped mountains wondrous fair
Like isles enchanted on a sea
Of pearl and gold, may meet the gaze
Of poor, half-frozen you and me.
Then, shimmering in the forenoon haze

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Beneath a cloud rift, may appear
For a brief moment minarets
Of gleaming white : while, far and near,
Burst forth swift, angry-flashing jets
And white cloud puffs one ne'er forgets.

Then, may be, the swift clouds will close
While we in solitude are left
Above their level : tints of rose
And violet in woolly weft
Enchant us till we seem to feel
A strange detachment from the pain
Of worldly hopes and cares. The wheel
Of our past years rolls back again,
And with child trust we gaze and gaze
Upon those snowy mountain heights
That evermore their heads will raise
Above the waste of cloud : such sights
For ever thrill with new delights.

Perchance, while high in air sit we,
From right athwart the welkin comes
A droning sound of mystery
That all our airman's ardour numbs.
We cannot see him but we know,
In the blue vault above our heads,
Hovers a swift exultant foe
And the same sun a glory sheds

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On us as on himself. We call
Beneath us till our basket shakes
All tremulous with the downward haul.
Rising, the fleecy cloud-rack makes
A seething mass that round us breaks.

We plunge right through its chill turmoil
Until dull earth appears again :
Better such momentary recoil
Than letting all our chances wane.
Masked equally from us and ours
By cloud and by the weird ellipse
Of our gas envelope, he scours
The seething cloud-rack, ere he dips
His wings within it. Should he come
Intent upon our being downed,
He'll dive right through and loose a drum
Of fiery bullets, zooming round
While thunder greets him from the ground.

What, then, may be our cruellest fate ?
We cannot say. We only know
If parachuting just too late,
Our stricken bodies earthwards go,
They will be buried with full rites
Befitting those in battle slain ;
And 'tis not always he who fights
With sword or bayonet can attain

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The glory that shall then be ours
For ever : seeing we had dared
Observe aloft for many hours,
To all the winds of heaven bared,
Until at last we were ensnared.

To-morrow ? What to-morrow brings
We'll leave unto the ruthless fates.
Hark ! now the fierce pack-leader sings
To his dog followers the hates
And loves to which each dog aspires,
While through the frozen swamp they roam
With answering howls. Heap high the fires,
Ere we too freeze let's talk of home :
Of how our banishment is hard,
Or how the war may one day end
When it has all our manhood marred.
We have a few more hours to spend :
Let's sit and talk as friend with friend.

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ROAD MAKERS

We who make that the lorries may mar, that the shell
bursts may tear,
We who look on the fight from afar and with never a
care
For the shells that may fall ; who are bound to toil day
and night,
Taming the sullen ground, transmuting the might
Of our sinews to fashion a road for our brothers to
tread,
We are bearing our nation's load, we are true to the
dead,
Though we're not in the fighting line. We have never
a chance
To take by assault or to mine or to handle a lance
Or a bayonet. Yet it is plain we are doing our best ;
Though we haven't much glory to gain we work with
a zest.
We are here more or less in the dark, but we know we
are here,
That the ancient illumining spark of our England austere
May continue to quicken the era of freedom begun.
We are here lest our children be crushed 'neath the
heel of the Hun.

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So we care not if menial tasks by the mighty ones set
Make our souls bleed; not one of us asks, though he swink and he sweat,
When this wearisome war's latest day from the clouds shall descend,
Knowing to work is to pray, and all things have an end.

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PSYCHOMACHIA

WHY 'gree we not, my soul and I? My soul says she would soar away
Into the regions of the sky, into the light of perfect day.

Say I: "Soul, soar not, lest you find for ever wider grow the way
"And by desire itself made blind still fail to find the perfect day."

E'en thus I keep my soul in chains of reasoning and measured speech,
Though at the sound of dulcet strains she oft-times flits beyond my reach.

Led by the music, voice and air when Lesbia plays the ivory keys
My soul wins free from every care and sings me subtle harmonies,

Nor wishes any wider range than Music's calm, smooth-flowing sea,
Intense in every subtle change, the type of all infinity.

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Thus fares it with my wayward soul when Music's spell
enchanteth her,
Yet oft, impatient of control, she chafes against the
barrier:

Which I, perforce, must strengthen by some iron weight
of reasoning;
Whereat she turns and tries to fly, yet ne'er can move
from out the ring

Of woven words that her annoy. Alas, I cannot choose
but go
Procure some new and curious toy and whisper to her
soft and low.

Like any child, my soul forgets the force of her con-
finement drear,
Her iron chains grow silken nets with gazing in some
crystal clear

Wherein she sees all forms of life (For all that is, is
mirrored there):
Swift Change and fierce Soul-slaying Strife each rend the
unresisting air,

And then again soft Slumber mild, with all those joys
that Sleep can bring
Alternate in a blissful wild where birds unceasingly do
sing.

E'en thus by methods firm yet kind my wayward soul I
mean to train
Till she at length in custom blind stay by my side without
a chain.

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FIRST LOVE

Oh, thoughts that come o'erpowering me,
Of days gone by, beyond compare,
Of halcyon days, most free from care:
Beside the peaceful, flowing sea,
The rugged cliff, thick-browed with greenery.

Of evenings I remember one.
Many were calm in that fair place,
But this was blissful, for his face
Beamed with a friendship ne'er undone
Whilst over ivied walks fast set the sun.

How all seemed whelmed in Music's tide!
The fairy moon smiled forth at me
And kissed the margin of the sea,
Then myriad merrymen, far and wide,
Laughing in silver livery shoreward hied.

Thenceforth no jarring jealousy
Of one who bore a Cain-marked brow
(Too foolish, as I think it now)
Disturbed our perfect harmony.
For days no cloud sullied the crystal sea.

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Yet Time brought me a dawn of red.
Ah, fate too cruel: to take my friend.
Must every heaven have an end?
Many the tears in secret shed
That friends so true should e'er be sundered.

Alas, we had reached the parting way.
Firm-graven on my memory
The last dead leaf that, languidly,
Fell where the flowers already lay,
The quick-caught breathing of the dying day.

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CYNIC AND POET

CYNIC :

" IT matters not what lovers say ;
Love lasteth only for a day.
Despite the vows all lovers pay
To Venus' shrine in early May,
The Wingèd Love soon flies away ;
It matters not what lovers say."

POET :

" It matters not what cynics say ;
True lovers' love can last for aye.
Nor silvered locks nor Time's decay
Can touch true love. It still doth stay,
Though youth's fair hours be flown away ;
It matters not what cynics say."

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PERDIDI MUSAM

HADES, dread shadow-land of weary gloom,
Where Joy laughs not and scarce can ever smile,
Where Sorrow heapeth up a goodly pile
Of increase—shattered hopes, and fears that loom
With darker certainty beyond the tomb ;
Methinks I too have lately for a while
Been wandering in some hopeless, barren isle
Close-bordering on the confines of your doom.
No blind Teiresias did I behold,
Fierce Ajax, or sad-fated Elpenor,
As once Odysseus on that mystic shore
Held ghostly converse with the great of old,
But that one Art wherein I most was bold
To seek success could give me joy no more.

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ARETHUSA

COME forth to Arethusa now the hyacinths unfold
Their mauve and purple raiment, oft praised of poets old.
Whoso comes to Arethusa shall cast all cares aside,
Seeing there Time's endless ravage by fresh Nature beautified.

Riding forth to Arethusa in the forefront of the year,
When the snow upon the mountains just began to disappear,
I beheld the fairest vista ever seen in my life's span ;
Nodding fruit trees, all in blossom, stretched as far as eye could scan,
Clinging creepers, ferns and mosses, hung above the eddying stream
Where, in water clear as crystal, swiftly darted silver bream.

Ancient heights, beloved of Pliny, cast athwart the magic glen
Such a glint of fairy gladness that the puny deeds of men
Sank to nothing. Half forgotten was the great world's bitter strife

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In the sights and sounds of Nature's endless miracle of life,
In the thoughts that welled unbidden of dead poets and their lore,
In the vision of the splendour of the grand old days of yore.

"Where are now Iacchian revels? Where the maddened Mænad throng?
"Was it here their rout, advancing, filled the hollow glen with song?
"Was it here that ancient casuist felt the magic and the might
"Of the cult that, half condemning, he refused for once to fight?
"Here? Or yonder, 'neath the mountain? None alive now know the place.
"Gone are all his fame and glory. Antique honour dies apace."

Lo, it chanced, as thus I pondered, my good charger slipped and fell
In a modern lorry rut, beside an ancient ruined well.
Drawing rein, I leant towards it. Close above its age-worn spout
Marble men and maids with laughter stepped across in rhythmic rout.
Last of all a little baby, carrying a tiny wreath,
Tripped along; his airy footfalls scarcely touched the ground beneath.

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How he laughed!—that child of marble. Yes—what
though above his head
Old Chronos' scythe lay ready, and old Chronos' arms
were spread,
Gathering in those youths and maidens with himself
among the rest—
His whole body shone with laughter. Never in my life
such zest
Saw I radiate from an infant, such a deep and boundless
joy
As from off that fount of marble, shed that little marble
boy.

Symbol of the joy of living, laughing bravely through
the years,
All my heart went forth to meet him. While my eyes
suffused with tears
My soul yearned for a small being in Time's womb far,
far away;
And I thought: "'Tis strange indeed how, a year ago
to-day,
"She and I . . . 'Twas spring-time then—such a Spring
as this . . . and how
"All our wealth of love has blossomed to its deep fulfil-
ment now."

So, come to Arethusa now the hyacinths unfold
Their mauve and purple raiment, oft praised of poets
old.

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Yes, come to Arethusa, all who speak Dame Nature's
tongue ;
Come forth ; Earth's freshest spring-time maketh now
all old hearts young.

FORMA MENTIS ÆTERNA

In dreams my thoughts still fly to thee,
In dreams unchecked they fly.
Across Sleep's bar, the spirit sense,
Led on by Love's omnipotence,
Can Time and Space defy.

In Sleep's calm hours my soul meets thine
High o'er Time's flowing sea,
Where Life and Death are not, and where
Nought mars my soul's sweet vision fair
Of only, only thee.

Death cannot part our spirits, for—
Where'er this body be—
Wind-blown o'er Alp or Apennine,
My tireless soul shall still seek thine
Through all eternity.

Long e'er I find that which I seek,
Since spirits never die,
Led forward by the magic sense
Of Love, I'll taste that heaven whence
Thy spirit draweth nigh.

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DRAGOMIR*

DRAWING nigh to Dragomir,
My horse snorted as with fear,
In the forefront of the year.

Distant vistas of the lake,
Seen 'twixt fresh green hills did make
All the artist in me wake.
Poppies crimson, white and mauve,
Daisies pied and foxgloves fauve,
O'er the path for victory strove.

In the village, long bereft
Of inhabitants, was left
Nought but flowers of Nature's weft.
Not a child came forth to greet
My arrival. No bare feet
On the cobble-stones did beat.

Sole, king stork sat on a tower
O'er the church porch : whence his scour
Swept the hills. I felt his power.
Solemn guardian of the place,
He'll watch on though Time efface
Every jot of human trace.

* Early in 1917 the inhabitants of Dragomir, a prosperous fishing village on Lake Ardzan, were, for strategic reasons, ordered to abandon their homes and retire along the British lines of communication.

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What perturbed my horse's heart,
What caused him to snort and start,
To discover passed my art.
Was it but the aspect drear
Of the spot, or danger near,
Made him start and snort in fear?

Mindful then of Balaam's ass,
I dismounted and did pass
Slowly through the flowers and grass.
In the village square it grew.
High above my head a few
Poppy seeds and petals flew.

Seeing I was firm, my horse
Yielded patiently to force,
Seemed to show some slight remorse.
He ceased snorting and advanced
With a measured pace. I glanced
Through a door by which we chanced.

There, upon the hearth, contained
By iron bars, charred wood remained,
And the floor with red was stained,
While, beside, a piteous heap
Of tattered garments still did keep
Semblance of a man asleep.

Checking then my heart unnerved,
I stepped forward and observed
Why my horse in horror swerved.

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Cries of fear I scarce restrained :
For, amid those rags blood-stained,
But a skeleton remained.

In that village of the dead,
Crime had gained its end, it said.
That was all my spirit read :
So, in haste, I turned away
Towards the fuller light of day,
Leapt my horse and did not stay.

How I mounted I scarce knew.
Past my horse's flanks there flew
Poppy seed and petals too.
We sped forward like the wind.
Though I dared not look, my mind
Felt that silent stork behind.

Riding hard I saw the lake
Even fresher beauties take ;
Yet my soul within did quake,
For I knew upon the tower
That old stork would sit and glower
Till the latest judgment hour.

Thus I fled from Dragomir
On a horse all wild with fear
In the forefront of the year.

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SPRING SONG

My sweet love, shall we to the woods
For there upon soft mosses rare,
White violets raise their snowy hoods
And Nature's face is wondrous fair.
My sweet love, shall we to the woods?

My sweet love, shall we to the hills?
For there aloft the air is pure,
And nought that natural beauty kills
In those pure regions can endure.
My sweet love, shall we to the hills?

My sweet love, shall we to a cot
With clematis and rose entwined—
Fit symbol of their happy lot
Whom, like us, true love doth bind?
My sweet love, shall we to a cot?

My sweet love, thus we'll ever live
In true communion, soul with soul,
Till all the bliss that Love can give
Shall weld our natures to one whole.
My sweet love, thus we'll ever live.

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LOVE'S AVOWAL

SHE that I dream of hath a form as fair
As any maid on whom these eyes did look
Since first their native shyness they forsook
And dared to gaze upon such beauties rare.
What though her sadness drive me to despair
Her silence for cold thoughts I ne'er mistook ;
For in her heart, as in an open book,
My heart can read ; true sympathy's writ there.
Go, little sonnet, then, and to her say
That, if the shadow of some care new-born
Make this world's pleasant landscape seem forlorn,
Love hath a wondrous charm to drive away
Such sad-hued thoughts. Bid her that charm obey
Lest from her heart Love's page by Time be torn.

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SONG FROM "ROSWAL"

BEFORE their lips had met their eyes had spoken.
Heart called to heart ere Love exchanged one token :
Before their lips had met their eyes had spoken.

Before their hands had joined their hearts united,
Soul flew to soul ere Love's first troth was plighted :
Before their hands had joined their hearts united.

Before they knew, Love had their souls o'ertaken,
As late spring flowers warm summer suns awaken :
Before they knew, Love had their souls o'ertaken.

Before their lips had met their eyes had spoken,
Heart called to heart ere Love exchanged one token
Before their lips had met their eyes had spoken.

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KUKUS

(A War-time Day-dream)

SEATED in a car in Kukus while the driver wandered off
I observed that ancient locus, tuned my spirit, did not scoff
At its squalor oriental, relic of a bygone age,
Seeking what is elemental to man's natural heritage.
Cobble-stoned and full of pitfalls, wound the one wide central street
Towards the hill-top where, 'mid grit walls, monks for ages sought retreat.
Ruined Danef's house before me glistened in the morning sun.
Though the flies did not ignore me I enjoyed the children's fun,
Reading in their fresh keen glances everything that's good and fair.
As a thought ofttimes entrances one whose mind is freed from care ;
Far away deep cobalt mountains, rounded off by cloud and mist,
Cast their spell on me. Cool fountains rose among them there, for kissed

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By the sun their waters glimmered. Nearer, in the forenoon haze,
Miles of glorious poppies shimmered riotously 'mid wheat and maize.
Nearer still, a barefoot maiden, drawing water from the well,
Paused to chat 'midst others, laden with amphoræ, tales to tell,
Maybe of our English folly: how, possessing wealth untold,
We had squandered it. A volley of swift words most glibly rolled
On their tongues like lines Homeric. What it all could be about
I knew not. An ancient cleric of the Greek church hobbled out
From a neighbouring low-roofed building; thence with ambling gait he toiled
Up the hill, the strong sun gilding rents beneath his sleeves long soiled.
All around while wistful children played there as in days of old
Turbaned men and trousered women paced the market, wrought and sold.
Here a hale old tarbooshed cobbler, stitching cross-legged in the shade,
Paused awhile to puff his hookah, which a fresh cool bubbling made.
There a coppersmith, hard working, whistled rhythmically and sang.
I could see his chisel jerking while his iron mallet rang,

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Fashioning antique designs. On my right an oily Greek
Spread his bales of stuff in lines, while a dame, with veiled cheek,
Hesitated which to buy. She was clad in deepest green;
Ruby lip and gleaming eye, 'neath her black veil but half seen,
Added to her other charms just that touch of mystery
Which imagination warms, and enchants like poesy.
Though I care not for such beauties, being to one woman bound,
E'en the shopman 'midst his duties marked how neatly she was gowned.
And I too am wholly human, so my thoughts did towards her go,
Having hardly seen a woman for a run of months or so.

* * * * *

Was it opium from the poppies caused a drowsiness to spread
O'er my soul? It seemed that copies of old melodies long dead
Through my mind reverberated. Then I saw that veiled dame
Beckon me. With soul elated, straightway from the car I came
To her side, while that old Greek smoothed the ruffles of his hair
And from 'neath his eyebrows sleek looked askance with jealous stare.

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Ofttimes seen in Salonika, I beheld then by her stand
A fat eunuch with a beaker and umbrella in one hand,
In the other pearlèd slippers. "Oh," thought I, "I'd best not come
"Meddling with such old fly flippers." Straightway there began a hum
Of low-vowellèd conversation (which I could not comprehend)
Till the eunuch, with elation, to the floor his head did bend,
Low salaaming, then retirèd, while the lady led me in
To the shop. In fez attirèd, came a little manikin
Bearing coffee on a tray, which we did partake of both.
Then the lady straight did say in fair English, "Sir, an oath
"I require of you: to help me carry out an ancient charm
'Swear, and neither djinn nor kelpie can have power to do you harm."
While she spoke the Greek unrolled on the floor a large round mat
Which, with Arabic enscrolled, bore the semblance of a cat
On its centre. "Once this carpet," said she, "in old Cairo hung;
"Now 'tis by the grace of Kismet found this ancient's goods among.
"I perceive you are a dreamer. Dream one dream with me awhile.
Here's the oldest transport steamer. Sitting on it, many a mile

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"We will travel. You must fancy that you are once more in France,
"Where my lover is, near Nancy: I would shield him from mischance."
Hearing this, my fear I shook off. On a horn she gave two hoots,
Summoning the boy who took off my tight-fitting riding boots,
While the fat old eunuch gravely brought her slippers. Then we stepped
On the mat. I noted naïvely at such charms she seemed adept,

For she made me swear again
That, in sunshine or in rain,
Be it pleasure, be it pain,
I would wish me back again

In fair France. "'Tis easy done," thought I, swearing,
"'Twill be fun
"To behold the Germans run now their great retreat's begun.
So I wished and, joining hands with the lady, shouted "France!"
For a moment the massed bands of all regiments, in a trance,
Made my ears ache till, with vertige, I sank down upon the mat,
Clutching at the furry image of that old Egyptian cat.
Then it seemed I closed my eyes. Lifted by a giant typhoon,
We were soaring to the skies quicker than a free balloon.

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" France, France, France !" the lady said, while my brain was in a whirl,
Then she bound about my head a quaint coronet of pearl.
This I saw when that I dared peep beneath the silken thread
Of my eyelashes. All bared was that lovely lady's head,
For her veil had sideways blown and her locks, as black as jet,
Were most beautiful I own ; thick with golden sequins set,
Her breast heaved tumultuously, while towards earth her glances bent.
" See, beneath 'tis Italy !" cried she then. I straightway leant
O'er the carpet's edge. Below, overspread with clinging vine,
Stretched the fertile vale of Po, bordered by the Apennine.
Right towards the Alpine bar dizzily we sped along
Till we crossed those snows that are, but once seen, remembered long.
Then, " On France," the lady said, " you must concentrate your mind.
" Think on France or we are dead. Nancy's towers are hard to find
" And the demons will not serve our true end if we keep not
" Our thoughts, straining every nerve, fixed upon the selfsame spot

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"Which my soul doth aye pursue." So I tried hard to wish on
While, beneath, the white clouds flew, and above, the hot sun shone.
Yes, I concentrated hard, though each minute seemed like hours,
Till I saw, by shell holes marred, the fair front of Nancy's towers.
Then the strangest of strange thoughts crept unbidden to my mind.
"What cared I for guns or forts? What if I could leave behind
"France and straight to England hie?" Thus despite my vow there came
To my mind the wish to vie with that rich-bedizened dame.
Working out the selfsame charm, longing aye for England's shore,
I who feared no demon's harm, I would wish me home once more.
But one pitiful appeal made the lady when she saw
My intention firm as steel. Some remorseless natural law
Caused her from our mat to glide, while I shot on through the air.
Then in vision I espied age-worn Oxford, wondrous fair,
Lie beneath 'twixt sun and rain. "Ah!" thought I, "this dream can't last,"
For my antique monoplane through the air was falling fast.

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All too soon it ceased this falling. Landing safely on my legs
Soon I heard my driver calling : "Sir, they haven't got no heggs."
Then in haste I rubbed my eyes and beneath their lids did peep,
Murmuring in mild surprise : "Think I must have been asleep."
"'Twas the wine you drank, I'll vow, sir," his stern looks most plainly said.
(Being good ten-year old Naussa, it had caused my drowsihead.)

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HADZI-JUNAS

CLEAR-LIMNED against the moonlight above yon ancient rune
The storks of Hadzi-Junas stand on one leg and croon,
While watch-dogs of the village howl loudly to the moon.

I stand within the graveyard, beside the prophet's stone;
Beneath my feet are rotting true Moslem blood and bone,
And, distant-dimmed, gun thunder makes music monotone.

These simple Moslem peasants, like mine own kith and kin,
Believed that, winning freedom from earthly dross and sin,
Their souls would mount Fate's ladder true Paradise to win.

Such creeds are surely nobler than fierce sciential doubt
Which holds that when Life's candle in darkness flickers out,
No more remains for mortals to fret themselves about.

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Ah, think we then of Heaven as some far-distant place,
Where Man, the much-forgiven, sees Beauty face to face
And treads with conscious footsteps Life's failures to efface.

Perchance, where yon star peepeth beneath soft, fleecy cloud,
That brighter world existeth where Joyance ne'er is cowed
And no one ever needeth a coffin or a shroud.

Wherefore then, puny creatures of Earth's ephemeral span,
Do we still fight and wrangle, amassing all we can,
If one day winneth freedom the soul that is in Man?

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LANCASHIRES

LILYWHITE and Triple Ten,
I would be with you again,
Hear your martial bugles call,
Feel the spirit that through all
Your battalions does pervade ;
Spirit whereof England made
What success she could when burst
O'er her head the war accursed.

How I wish that I could be
With you all again, could see
Our battalion dress its line.
Number Eight platoon was mine.
With what pride each private stood
Still as soldiers carved in wood,
'Neath our Sergeant-Major's wand,
Waiting for the next command.

Yet I seem to see the face
Of our gallant Lowe ; the grace
Of the Colonel's charger, when
He commanded all his men,
While our Percy by his side
Taught young subalterns to ride.

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Few of them remain, alas!
Most ere now have drained youth's glass.
Time's remorseless stride has stepped
O'er their heads and onward swept.

"Pèrcy" has, they tell me, gone
On the staff, where Acheron,
Let us hope, may claim no cost.
Tyser, Lowe and Wyllie, lost
In the forward push, remain
'Midst the mud of Flanders' plain,
And our Colonel's body lies
Under earth 'neath foreign skies.

Still I hope one day to see
Hickson, Spicer, Brierly,
Hanson, House and Bearman bold,
"Lulu," wondrous to behold
Letting fall his monocle
While he roared, like Basan's bull,
Some clear-worded drill command,
Or in signal raised a hand;
Edwards whom I met by chance
When upon short leave from France,
In a Soho restaurant,
Pantisocrat jubilant,
True at heart to old ideals,
Though each spring his youth's sap steals;
Bracewell young and ever keen,
Our war-worn instructor Green,

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Newcomen, my school chum's friend—
Who knew Tyrrell ere his end—
Tyrrell who, upon a time,
Praised my early budding rhyme.

Ah, the men that we had then,
Ne'er can be their likes again.
Most of them were killed before
1915 closed. Death's door
Lay ajar for their compeers,
And his grim, remorseless shears
Slit their fate's thread ere they knew
Life's monotony. A few
Still surviving now deplore
The huge folly of the war,
Having lost a useful limb.
How the luck of war is grim.

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GERBASEL

'MIDST these four crumbling walls, far away from the hum
And the bustle of cities, I oftentimes come.
I sit on this weather-worn stone in the shade
And gaze at the wreckage that Time's hand hath made.

Years ago these war-stricken four walls held a roof
Made of well-seasoned timbering, rain and wind proof.
No jot now remains of its symmetry quaint :
Wild bees make their home in the eyes of a saint.

Yet, though insects and mice and the birds of the air
Have for long made its rubble and plaster their lair,
Far grander the vaulting of blue sky now spread
Above this old derelict church of the dead.

For, in place of crude paintings, oak beams and iron bars,
Now the infinite heavens and light of the stars
And varying splendours of sunlight and cloud
Make even more human this poor, fresco'd crowd.

Nicholas, Jacobus, Smeridon . . . there they stand
With their symbols of office tight-clasped in each hand,
Their faces unmoved, though the colours grow dim
And it's long since their spirits were cheered by a hymn.

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While above their pale forms towards the limitless blue
Fearless bird-men are mounting, their duty to do,
These nimbus-crowned saints, standing silent and meek,
Methinks would now say, if they only could speak :

" Human thought must confine within definite bonds
" Man's deep-sentient soul that still sighs for beyonds.
" Soon cometh a day when life's stern bondage ends :
" Ye've only to wait for the fate that befriends."

Every ship hath its port, every bird hath its nest :
In Earth's bosom at last every heart findeth rest.
Though chances of life may deceive and beguile,
Time triumphs at last, if we wait but a while.

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ONWARD AND UPWARD

NOT Goethe nor yet Shakespeare will I take
As this life's final form wherein to pour
The molten richness of my young mind's ore,
Now that to manhood's powers my soul's awake.
Rather will I the beaten track forsake
That such as these have trod. Gone on before,
They teach us how we too at length may soar
If we for our own selves new paths will make.
Girt round with freedom, led by purpose high,
For ever pushing forward to their goal,
These faltered not, but raised the battle cry,
"Onward and upward." Thus the human soul
Learns slowly all life's weakness to defy
Ere its predestined glory shall unroll.

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LOVE'S PHILOSOPHY

O RADIANT maiden—you whose smile
Hath entered in my heart this while—
O radiant maiden, will you say
If you can love me for a day?
If you will love me for an hour
My life will take on such a power
That all my thoughts, my deeds and words
Will sharper be than edgèd swords;
If for a moment you will love
What's good in me, far, far above
The countless herd of common men
My soul shall soar, beyond the ken
Of Life's dull round of hopes and fears.
The laughter that's akin to tears,
The bitter laughter of the wise,
Shall ne'er be thine or mine, dear. Eyes
Wherein Love's lamp shines never shed
Their lustre till that love is dead;
And fear not love like mine can die
While you are you and I am I,
For, dear one, you must plainly see
'Tis love that lasts 'twixt you and me.
Since heads grown grey in love take on
A fairness good to look upon,

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Since love like mine demands return,
Sweep your heart's floor, and straightway burn
Cold thoughts and pale philosophies
Within the flame of Love's own eyes.

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JANESH—A MARCH MORNING

BELES and Krusha Balkan, since to-day
From all my soul holds dearest long exiled,
I watch at length your snows, still undefiled,
Melt at the touch of Spring and fade away,
My spirit calls to you ; I cannot stay
Mute for a longer period of pain ;
My soul seeks utterance, as the silent rain
Falls from the clouds upon a sultry day.

What shall I sing ? I care not for the show
Of passing human aims ; the battle's strife,
Save for its sacrifice of human life,
Leaves my thoughts cold. What makes the violet
blow
Beneath your ever narrowing fields of snow
Moves me far more than aught that in the name
Of freedom spurs the headstrong patriot's flame,
Causing the tide of war to ebb or flow.

Am not I then a patriot ? Understood
In the wide sense, I am. I will not yield
A single step upon Life's battlefield,
Nor bow me down to things of stone and wood.

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For Freedom's sake, I have done all I could
To hasten the dim dawn of that glad day
When Love's Republic shall at length hold sway
And all mankind live on in brotherhood.

Yet am I fearful lest the greed for gain
May warp each nation's purpose in this war.
Intent on levelling Earth's threshing-floor
For their own use, they may forget the bane
That works within, their vitals to enchain—
The war of class, the curse of wealth's control,
Each checks upon the freedom of the soul.
Such thoughts as these oft make my spirit wane.

Teach me a song to sing, ye mighty ones.
What if this early spring should be my last?
What if I perish ere this hour be passed
Nor ever look again on autumn suns?
What though so swiftly through the hour-glass runs
My fate's sand that I reach this life's confine?
Still shall Iacchos gild the clinging vine,
Still shall resound the voice of hostile guns.

The gods of Greece are dead, and never more
Shall thunderbolts from out a cloudless sky
Startle inhabitants of Arcady;
Yet dreader bolts than these now daily pour

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On tent and tower and town with sullen roar,
Dropped by the new bird-men who swooping come
Upon us unawares, with droning hum,
Like harpies or the winged djinns of yore.

Listen ! I hear them coming. Heralded
By ominous bursts of swift, aerial shell
And whirr of engines, swoop their squadrons fell
Through the empyrean. The very dead
Quake 'neath their narrow mounds with grass o'erspread,
Knowing not if chance bolts may fall their way ;
Fretting at bonds, fear-stricken horses neigh,
And all live things are filled with subtle dread.

Their bombs are falling all around me now.
Like shrieking demons from the nether hells,
More furiously than ever whirr the shells.
Not all their thunder shall my spirit cow
Nor add one furrow to this care-worn brow,
What though each burst on death's dark journey sends
Some ill-starred soul from my soul's chiefest friends,
By all the gods of Tartaros, I vow.

Nothing on earth can thrill me save the Spring
Which, with eternal mystery, renews
The sap of plants and flowers, the blood and thews
Of man and beast and bird, that maketh ring
Frog melody amid rock clefts that bring
The clear streams from the hills, and still uplifts
Man's soul, with joyance at the wondrous gifts
Of Nature, singing as e'en now I sing.

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The workings of the Universal Mind
Surpass our puny thought. Ye mountains hoar,
While back above your snows the bird-men soar
My heart goes with them, for they leave behind
Earth's galling prison chains, perchance to find
A wider sphere for man. Though I disdain
The sad futility of warfare's gain,
I still keep hope and faith in humankind.

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VERGETOR—AN AUGUST NIGHT

THE flowers of Spring are gone, and all bereft
Of their rich revelry, this parched hillside,
Teeming with insect life and the full tide
Of shrill cicada voices, has been left
For a brief season unremarked, uncleft
By bird-men's bolts. Aloft the ruin where
The old Turk lived are perched a mournful pair
Of gaunt-limbed storks who meditate some theft.

While o'er their heads more storks with languid cry
Glide in swift circles, silhouetted clear
Against red cloudlets, from afar and near
Beneath the echoing hills, the guns untie
Their erstwhile dormant thunder, and the sky
Above them gleams with bursts of angry flame,
That mock the sunset, till the whole Earth's frame
Shakes with the tumult, ere dread Night draws nigh.

Swiftly it ceases and a silence soft
Descends on all things, till the raucous calls
Of frogs beneath the quarry's echoing walls
Break sharply forth. Was that a night bird scoffed

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Or the lost soul of one who wandered oft
In ancient days beside yon ruin hoar?
The guns are silent, but I hear the roar
Of grass fires kindling in some distant croft.

First parent of all things, Night quietly spreads
Her sombre mantle o'er the heavenly plain
And through it pricks each star, like drops of rain
Or notes of music. Delicate greens and reds,
Left by the sunset, fade high o'er the heads
Of those stork sentinels. Dim gunnery
Supplies the bass tones of Earth's symphony
And to the dark Man's wearied spirit weds.

But not for long, for soon the guardian lamp
Of the Earth's pilgrimage directs her beams
Athwart yon Eastern hill, that straightway gleams
Transfigured and brought nearer. Round the camp
Half-human jackals howl, and near the damp
Mosquito-haunted reeds, the frogs renew
Their noisy parliament, while horses chew
Their halters, frightening scorpions with their stamp.

'Midst ants and toads and locusts demon-eyed,
Shut in this earthy hovel through the night,
I hear Anopheles, the fever sprite,
Winding his shrill, sad horn. My mind, untied

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From War's titanic tasks, though sorely tried,
Harks back insistently towards vanished friends,
While my poor body, ere each half-hour ends,
Turneth in restlessness from side to side.

O, wherefore come ye, friends, to haunt me so?
Wherefore in silence does your pageant pass
Before my inner vision? Though the grass
Lies green above your graves, your souls, I know,
For ever towards fresh glories grandly go,
While I eke out a dismal round of toil
Amid War's tumult and the loud turmoil
Of Life's swift cataract that towards Death doth flow.

To die in battle 'midst the azure fields
Of heaven, or upon the shell-swept plain,
Seemeth far nobler than to feel life wane
Beneath the venom a small insect wields.
What though this stifling net my body shields
From his grim onset, when, as now, I hear
His shrill note nigh my head, to chilly fear
At its dread warning my whole being yields.

Perchance his poisoned shaft all unawares
Hath pierced e'en now to my blood's central stream.
Perchance 'tis only in my ague-dream
That sphinx-like locust through the moonlight glares.

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To track these wayward thoughts to their dark lairs
My soul in opiates I fain would steep.
Of what avail to stay on here and weep
Were we but certain Death could ease our cares?

Dawn, and the light of a star in the violet sky.
Dawn, and I've lain all night in a fever of dreams;
Dawn. Now great Nature wakes it ill beseems
Her worshipper life's mandate to defy.
Thus, ere the hour of battle draweth nigh,
Above the radiant clouds, where Freedom leads,
My thoughts spread out beyond all tongues and creeds;
I know Man's peerless spirit cannot die.

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ENGLAND'S TRIBUTE

BENEATH Carbon Cape, a submarine spied,
Through its periscope, troops on a transport. Beside
The ship's davit posts sat a soldier apart,
Looking seawards awhile, then transfixing his heart
In deep, passionate thoughts on white paper. A bird
Hovered high, 'twixt the sea and the sun. Nothing stirred
On the Mediterranean's crystalline floor
Save the periscope, darting beneath it. A roar
As of twenty score cannon, a waterspout, then
The deep is strewn o'er with ship's wreckage and men ;
And the bird up aloft, 'twixt the sea and the sun,
Hears the soldier lament that his life's sand has run.
"O swift bird, lend your wings that my soul may fly hence
"To my dear wife at home, to the sweet innocence
"Of our baby boy's smile," cries he, longing to be
Where his young wife is waiting, the babe on her knee—
Waiting in patience, unknowing his plight,
Hoping all day and praying all night
That her soldier's strong arms may encircle again
Her soft, yielding body. 'Twixt sunshine and rain
Something swoops, and it seems to the poor, dying man

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That high over the seas he is raised. His thought's span
Sees the kingdoms of earth in their glory and pride,
Till his spirit is wafted his lone wife beside.
"What is that, Baby? Look, 'tis a beautiful bird."
And the child with delight stretches hands out. A word,
The one word she has taught him, escapes from his lips.
"Daddy." "No dear. A bird." Then a strange thought outstrips
All her reason. She weeps, and she cannot tell why,
Yet she feels in her heart their true love can ne'er die.

Above Doiran lake an aeroplane banked
A second too late, and the shrapnel that clanked
Through its ailerons caused it to shiver and swerve
Unexpectedly, taxing the pilot's nerve.
Ere he fell 'midst the hills his soul had fled home
To his chosen one's house that looks out on the foam
Where the Irish sea meets with the Lough of Belfast.
Then she felt a strange thrill through her whole being passed
As of somebody's presence. Remembered too late,
She knows 'twas the message she had of his fate.

Young Subaltern Smith, of the ——th Fusiliers,
Though he'd lost his platoon, having conquered his fears,
Found a handful of men on a desolate hill.
Some were his, some not his. Some lay silent and still
With a bullet or two in their vitals. He cried:

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"For the sake of the living, for their sakes who have died,
"Let us charge!" and revolver in hand led the rout.
What was that? The whole ground 'neath his feet seemed to spout
With a sulphurous flame. He looked backwards to find
Where the hill stood—a chasm. His men had been mined.
He alone in his eagerness had escaped death,
He alone. He'd scarce time to recover his breath
Ere he saw, in a partly dug trench at his feet,
His own brother lying. The flickering beat
Of the heart made him judge he'd completed life's span.
Then the dying boy opened his eyes and began,
"Brother Edward, I knew that you'd be sure to hear
"And you'd come when I called you. Shed never a tear.
"Write home to our Mother and tell her I said,
"Our love lives on, though this body lies dead."

By Salonique Bay, the desolate heart
Of a soldier, despite all known medical art,
Felt the death-grip of fever upon him. His brain,
'Midst a whirlwind of ague-bred thoughts, knew the pain
Of a hope unfulfilled, a high joy he'd ne'er win.
When the lull that succeeds Life's last struggle set in
The watcher beside him with wonder descried
A smile on his lips. 'Twas for England he died.

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VITÆ VINUM AMOR

THIS wine we drink to-day, Love,
Upon cool heights did grow,
When you and I at play, Love,
In childish mood did go.
In childish mood did go, Love,
Beside the crystal stream,
And thoughts of Love's first May, Love,
Flowed in a blissful dream.

I'm wrong, you thought not of it,
But, in my mind, the sense
Of Love's diviner presence,
And his omnipotence,
Raised round my heart a bulwark,
And from my mind's towers hurled
Base thoughts. Love kept my spirit
Unspotted from the World.

Though long our time of waiting,
And many a sun hath set,
The waters of that river
Flow by its rushes yet.

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The courses of our lives, Love,
Through many a change have led,
Now, meeting, they are strengthened
By Love's own fountain-head.

This wine through sappy tendrils
Drawn by the sun and rain,
Distilled itself in clusters
Of violet grapes. whose stain
Spread wide o'er sunlit hill-tops
Until, at vintage-time,
'Twas gathered by the peasants
With antique dance and rhyme.

Thenceforth, long years maturing,
It lay in cellars cool,
While you and I were learning
In Life's remorseless school
Full many a useful lesson.
Your person, like a flower,
Increased in beauty daily
Until this perfect hour.

And not alone in body,
But in the spheres of mind
Your own dear self, maturing,
Grew freer, unconfined

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By pettiness of custom.
'Twas thus you came to see,
Knowing true love from false love,
The love that is in me.

So, touch your glass to mine, Love
And show me in your eyes
The warmth of true affection
That Time and Change defies,
And ere the warm wine courses
Through our still youthful veins,
Repeat with me this toast, Love
"True Love that never wanes."

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FORTESCUE, MACHINE GUNNER

Of Fortescue I spake by chance,
" Did you know Fortescue, free-lance,
" The trainer of my first platoon,
" Who from our ken swam all too soon ?"
" Know him !"—a voice with tears inside,
The tears a brave man strives to hide—
" Know Fortescue !" the brave man said,
" Would that 'twere I, not he, were dead.
" We two together for a year
" Lived the life noble, knew no fear,
" Mowed the Hun down from day to day,
" Yes, every one that came our way.
" Lying not fifty yards apart,
" We'd, as each slipped fresh belts in, dart
" A friendly glance or wave the hand,
" Urging each other to withstand
" Whatever odds might come our way.
" So fought we through the livelong day,
" And when the mists of evening damp
" Began to fall, the selfsame lamp,
" Served us for light within a hole
" We shared with mice and brother mole.
" Through slime and mud and filthy weather
" We laughed and talked and thought together ;

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" Probing the inner soul of things,
" Being as happy as two kings,
" Each ruling his own tribe of men ;
" Though all around us stretched a fen
" Of shell holes and at times we fed
" Sitting on garments of the dead.
" All this we did not long ago,
" And now he knows what dead men know."

" —'Twas true, then. Tell me how he died,"
I said. The brave man brushed aside
A tear that, in despite of all,
Down his swart cheek began to fall.
He glanced athwart the nullah bed
That from our camp towards Marian led,
He watched the storks fly overhead,
Then drained his glass, and slowly said :
" Killed in a car whilst hurrying back
" Towards Boulogne town ; he chose a track
" Most treacherous, in hope to see
" His sweet wife sooner ; 'gainst a tree,
" Careering madly, he o'erturned ;
" Thus to its end his life's flame burned."

Grasping his charger's stirrup band,
Without more words he shook my hand ;
Then mounted and rode Marian way
At the sad closing of the day.
Never since then my heart's been gay.

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MY MELODY

I HAD a little melody, in a moment of quiet rest,
When the young moon looked woeful pale from out the ruddy West,
So sweet, so calm, so beautiful, I hear it yet again,
The memory of it still has power to ease my heart of pain.
But, in the bustle of the years, I lost awhile that power,
Nor set my feet upon life's road to music every hour ;
And what had been in memory had wellnigh ceased to be
Till, on a day, I chanced upon that selfsame melody.
It was not 'neath the garish skies of foreign climes, I ween,
But 'midst the quieter glories of an English sylvan scene
I caught the distant music that my soul had longed for so
And, in soft-breathing twilight, heard those strains of long ago.
With loins regirt, then, starting forth, I sought that melody,
Which as I journeyed on through gloom sighed in a minor key,
And o'er the world's wide desert full joyfully I strayed
Till I reached this life's oasis that melody had made,
And there I found my melody in a moment of quiet rest
When the young moon looked woeful pale from out the ruddy West ;
So sweet, so calm, so beautiful, I hear it yet again,
So soft, of such deep comfort full, so soothing to all pain.

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THE HOME-COMER

NIGHT and day, night and day, he dreamt of a little town that stands
At the back of an old well-weathered bay, whose sea-girt rocks and wrinkled sands
Haunted him still in other lands.

Beneath the heights of Gallipoli and then before Seres' fair white walls
And towering minarets did he hear in his heart the Tor birds' calls
And the sound of the Devon waterfalls.

So, when his turn for leave had come and choice was given him, he preferred
The long sea-route. Amid the hum of the ship's daily life, a bird
Trilled in his heart, by home thoughts stirred.

Though wireless signalled submarines and thrilling messages of war,
He only thought upon the scenes of earlier years: the silent Tor
Lived in his mind for evermore

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He said: "This selfsame sea that flows around the earth from pole to pole
"Laps gentlest round a shore that glows with ruddy, rock-bound cliff and knoll,
"Whose verdured coverings ease the soul."

For all that wealth of tree and fern and rolling mead, whose green attains
A depth for which tired spirits yearn, still binds their hearts in silken chains
Who once have known the Devon lanes.

As towards those lanes the good ship sped, he had no thought of dangers passed,
His spirit paled not with the dread of Hun sea-stealth, but seemed to cast
All cares aside in hope steadfast.

And by good luck they did escape the ambush mines, the things unknown
That lay beyond each isle and cape, by human sea-ghouls daily sown
Throughout the widened danger zone.

Till, on a day, they sighted land that one and all aboard proclaimed
To be the Devon coast. His stand on the fore deck he took, inflamed
To the heart's core, by hopes untamed.

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Then a thick fog dropped like a pall betwixt the coast
line and the sun.
Through it they only heard the call of bell or siren, and
the gun
Which told them that the day was done.

Being becalmed, they feared to move, yet drifted onward
through the night.
Hoping the mist would soon improve, they prayed that
by full morning light
They'd recognise some bay or bight.

Alas! before full morning came the ship's keel struck a
drifting mine.
A quivering thrill spread through her frame, into her
screw-shaft rushed the brine,
And her poop touched the water line.

Aloof he stood, amidst men dazed by prospects of a
watery tomb,
And steadfastly towards shore he gazed while the mist
lifted, till a coomb
Shone silhouetted through the gloom.

That was enough. In the red dawn his statue-like warm
limbs he bared
And leapt. By homing instinct drawn towards shore,
with strength yet unimpaired,
Through the chill wavelets on he fared.

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Further and further seemed that shore which ere he
leapt appeared so near:
While, high above the surging roar of the sea's rippling,
shrieks of fear
From drowning comrades smote his ear.

On, on he strove. He found a log and to it lashed his
failing frame.
He watched the distant banks of fog dwindle to nothing,
whilst, aflame
Amidst red clouds, the strong sun came.

Splendour of light on sparkling waves, splendour of
cloud and azure sky,
Splendour of sound from shoreward caves, glimpse of
white wings, a sea-bird's cry,
How glorious on the deep to lie!

Swimming and drifting, his heart thrilled with one clear
hope from earlier years
That now perchance might be fulfilled at last, since
absence oft endears
And true love's sweet in maiden ears.

Perhaps she thought about him now, perhaps that
warmth within him came
From the clear soul beneath her brow that long ago
first set aflame
Love fires throughout his youthful frame.

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Yet cold the water was, and though the sea was glorious, he knew
Or ever the ebb-tide should flow, no matter whence the winds that blew,
His dangers, shorewards, hourly grew.

Thus, by degrees, his heart's high hope changed to a vague foreboding dread
That after all he might ne'er cope with the strong currents that were said
To set in while the ebb race sped.

Toiling his utmost, hard he strove to reach the inmost current belt,
Yet evermore stern forces drove his strong limbs seawards, till he felt
His last reserves of courage melt.

All through that day, in a half-dream, he heard strange bell-like voices call,
Soothing his soul. Sheep bells they'd seem by whispering fell and waterfall
Or things far off beyond recall.

And then again like church bell chimes they rang more clearly in his ear,
Recalling distant happy times, his boyish musings and the tear
He shed beside his mother's bier.

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Dead. Was he dying? He scarce knew, nor cared
much now. He lay and sighed
While through his numbed form slowly grew a deeper
numbness that untied
His soul from feeling . . . till . . . he died.

Then as night fell a body, cast on the chill sands, lay
helplessly
Where, linking up the distant past, betwixt the moon-
light and the sea,
A girl sat weeping silently.

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TREE LOVERS

I DREAMT that you and I were trees, that moss and
lichen round our knees
Provided cool green haunts for bees and sharded
beetles. Here and there
In shade and sunshine, wondrous fair, before me waved
your aureate hair.

While on the wind's wing came along, now sighing soft,
now rustling strong,
The haunting music of your song, my thoughts set to
like music flew
Upon the breeze from me to you and daily deeper,
tenderer grew.

But I was chained, I could not turn and clasp you to me,
though the burn
Of love desire made my roots spurn the very loam from
which I drank
Life sustenance. Dew-drenched and dank, down
towards the earth my tendrils sank.

Soon, then, I heard the plaintive sigh of your lament
which, wafted nigh,

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Assured me you were chained as I. Victims alike of cruel fate,
We, deeming it unwise to hate, schooled our sad souls to contemplate.

Slowly great Nature's monotone pulsation grew to be our own.
We pitied man, a feather blown. We pitied beasts and birds who sped
By diverse instincts daily led towards some stern fate unhallowèd.

We knew we should alone remain, looking on life 'twixt sun and rain,
And yearly grander heights attain, until Death took our branches hoar
Beneath his wing. Then through his door towards dim Nirvana we should soar.

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JACQUELINE

FRAIL, tender blossom, Jacqueline,
Dear heart's delight, sweet flower of flowers,
Hadst thou but lived a little space,
Learning the changing years to face,
Thy mother's and my joy had been
Far deeper in the summer hours.

Then only had Love's tenderest mood
Entwined our hearts. Could we have seen
Thy life expand, thy thoughts unfold,
Thy body growing in the mould
And perfect grace of womanhood,
Such joy were ours, my sad heart's queen.

But now in silence must we bear
Through Life's dark way our woeful teen,
Knowing that bitterest of things,
A deep soul-yearning for the Springs
That come not. Ah, the beauty rare
Of thy frail form, by me unseen!

For I ne'er saw thee, Jacqueline,
Ne'er held thy flower-like hand in mine.

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Yet sometimes, when the wind blows low,
And leaves hang tremulous, I go
Musing upon what might have been,
And my torn heart is wholly thine.

I fancy, when in such calm hours
I gaze upon Earth's beauteous sheen,
That nought e'en now thy being mars.
Thus, always, in the steadfast stars
And the sad beauty of the flowers
I feel thy presence, Jacqueline.

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A POINT OF VIEW

You who never saw the heavens decked with pearl
festoons of shrapnel;
Never, in the vault above you, saw the stallings and the
combats
Of the supermen, the heroes; never felt the breath of
cannon,
Heard the fatal thud of shell-bursts; never, in the din
of battle,
Heard the whizzing of the bullets, saw the faces of the
wounded
Smile ineffably in sadness, saw the death glance and the
terror
Of poor agonising horses—you who, throughout all this
war time,
Held a profiteering billet in "munitions," while your
betters
Shed their life blood; you, we pray you, answer us.
What are your feelings
Now the murderous war has ended? Better men than
you have perished,
Better deeds than yours have shattered young careers
ere fame could reach them,
Yet you quietly share their honours and a grateful-
hearted nation
Pins upon your breasts a ribbon. Are you satisfied to
live now,

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You who ne'er saw foreign service? Have you not
some conscience prickings?
You, whose well-cut khaki tunics never knew the mud
of trenches,
Spurrèd men who ne'er rode horses, sitting at your desks
with spurs on—
Tell us, does the steel not prick you? We have seen
you trip and stumble,
Heard the clinking of your spur chains on the marbled
steps of Whitehall,
As you strolled down to your office. Regular in hours
of office,
You excelled in writing minutes. "Passed to you for
information,"
Neatly typed by war-badged maidens, kept you busy all
the morning.
After lunching at the Carlton, or some club by you
frequented,
For your health's sake you would wander in the parks
to see the squirrels,
Then return to sign more minutes, buying on the way a
paper
Which informed you how your brothers, in the mud of
France or Flanders,
In the basin of the Tigris, in the marshes of the
Struma,
Fought and died the death of heroes. Now the war at
length has ended
Will you still sit on there, keeping men who fought for
you from places?

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Surely, if a spark of manhood rests among you, you will welcome
Us, the battle-stained remnant of the men who fought for England.
We left all things, wives and children, hopes of gain when hopes were highest,
We have suffered through long vigils all the pangs of separation.
We have striven to acquit us like the men of old who, raising
England's fame above all nations, nothing recked of gain or glory.
Now at last our task is ended, England's star shines brighter, fairer,
Through our efforts; therefore cherish no resentment if, returning
To our native land, we ask you for some breathing-space, some corner
Where, secured from warfare's turmoil, we may rest us from the conflict.
All of us are very weary, most of us are sorely wounded.
Give to us who gave you all things, share with us your cushioned places.
Thus and only thus may you, sirs, vindicate your ancient lineage,
Prove you ne'er were cowards nor traitors, show yourselves true sons of England.

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BALKAN FANCIES

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

CAPT. A. J. MANN, R.A.F.

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